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ABSTRACT

The status of women enrolled in collegiate and noncollegiate schools in spring 1976 and social and economic characteristics of these students are examined, based on data from the U.S. Census Bureau's 1976 Survey of Income and Education. For students who were dependents, information is presented on their families. Findings include the following: over 5 million women were enrolled in college in spring 1976, and they comprised 45 percent of the total college enrollment; the economic and social characteristics of women and men college students were very similar; women had about the same rates as men for being financially dependent on their parents, working while attending school, and attending college but not completing 4 years; 60 percent of all women students and 56 percent of all men students attended college full time; enrollment rates for women and men were similar except in the age bracket 22 to 34 years, in which a smaller proportion of women were enrolled in college; a larger proportion of women independent college students were in the highest income category compared with men independent college students; 8 percent of women independent college students and 4 percent of men independent college students were living below the poverty level; among those independent full-time undergraduate students who worked, women earned less during the year than men; nearly one and a half million women 16 years old and over were enrolled in noncollegiate schools; and 16 percent of women independent noncollegiate students were living below the poverty level, double the proportion of men independent noncollegiate students. (SW)

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Characteristics of Women Postsecondary Students

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Characteristics of Women Postsecondary Students

by

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and

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NCES 82-317

FOREWORD

This report is one of a series of five reports which describe the socioeconomic characteristics of different groups of postsecondary students in 1976, using Survey of Income and Education data. The other reports cover:

- Students with Language Backgrounds other than English
- Hispanic Students
- Black Students
- Students Twenty-five Years and Older

Technical Notes, available in a separate report, describe the survey methodology and provide definitions and standard errors for selected items.

Susan Hill served as project officer of the contract to conduct secondary analyses of Survey of Income and Education data. Susan Hill and Alice Kroliczak coauthored the reports on the characteristics of postsecondary students. Joseph Froomkin, of Joseph Froomkin Inc., conducted the analyses of the data under contract to NCES.

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November 1981

HOW TO OBTAIN MORE INFORMATION

The Technical Notes and single copies of this and the other series reports can be obtained free while supplies last by sending a request with a separate self-address mailing label for each report to: Statistical Information Office, National Center for Education Statistics, 400 Maryland Avenue, SW., (Presidential Building), Washington, D.C. 20202, telephone (301) 436-7900.

Information about the Center's statistical program and a catalog of NCES publications may also be obtained from the Statistical Information Office.

Additional information about the series of reports on postsecondary students is available from Susan T. Hill, National Center for Education Statistics, 400 Maryland Avenue, SW., (Presidential Building), Washington, D.C. 20202, telephone (301) 436-7860.

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HIGHLIGHTS

Over 5 million women were enrolled in college in the Spring of 1976; they comprised 45 percent of the total college enrollment.

The economic and social characteristics of women and men college students were very similar. Women had about the same rates as men for: being financially dependent on their parents, working while attending school, and attending college but not completing four years.

Sixty percent of all women students and 56 percent of all men students attended college full-time.

Enrollment rates for women and men were similar except in the age bracket 22 to 34 years, in which a smaller proportion of women were enrolled in college.

A larger proportion of women independent college students were in the highest income category compared with men independent college students.

Eight percent of women independent college students and four percent of men independent college students were living below the poverty level.

Among those independent full-time undergraduate students who worked, women earned less during the year than men.

Nearly one and a half million women, age 16 and over, were enrolled in noncollegiate schools in the Spring of 1976; they accounted for 47 percent of the total enrollment in noncollegiate schools.

Sixteen percent of women independent noncollegiate students were living below the poverty level, double the proportion of men independent noncollegiate students.

INTRODUCTION

Women have the educational prerequisites for a fuller participation in higher education; in 1976, the proportion of women who had graduated from high school was the same as that of men, 63 percent. However, the proportion of women who had completed four years of college was only 11 percent of all high school graduates, two percentage points lower than that of men. The largest difference was observed in the proportion of men and women who went beyond the four years of college (baccalaureate level). Only 6 percent of all women high school graduates, as contrasted with 12 percent of men, went beyond the undergraduate level.

This report describes the status of women enrolled in collegiate and noncollegiate schools in the Spring of 1976 and presents a profile of the social and economic characteristics of these women students. It is based upon data collected in 1976 by the Census Bureau, using the Survey of Income and Education.1/ The report discusses women in college first, and is followed by a chapter on women in noncollegiate education. In the case of financially dependent students, information is presented on their parental families. Standard errors have been calculated, and differences between groups are cited only if the difference was statistically significant at the .05 level or beyond.

1/ For definition of terms and a description of the Survey of Income and Education, see the Technical Notes.

CHAPTER 1

ENROLLMENT IN COLLEGE

Participation Rates

A total of 5.4 million women were enrolled in college classes in the Spring of 1976. Women comprised 45 percent of the total college enrollment, although they comprised 52 percent of the total population 16 and over, and of all high school graduates.

Item	Total number (in thousands)	Number of women (in thousands)	Women as percent of total number
Population 16 and over	154,661	81,034	52
High school graduates	98,101	51,459	52
Enrolled in college	11,955	5,438	45

Student Characteristics

Some 80 percent of the 5,438,000 women students enrolled in college were undergraduates. The remainder were persons who had completed four years of college, and were now enrolled in regular or adult education classes at a college. At the undergraduate level, a greater proportion of women than men attended college full-time (table 1).

Table 1. -- Women and men college students, by level of enrollment and attendance status: 1976

Level of enrollment* and attendance status	Women		Men	
	Number (in thousands)	Percent of total	Number (in thousands)	Percent of total
Total.....	5,438	100	6,517	100
Undergraduate enrollment.....	4,336	(80)	5,018	(77)
Full-time.....	2,883	53	3,128	48
Part-time.....	1,452	27	1,890	29
Other enrollment.....	1,103	(20)	1,499	(23)
Full-time.....	358	7	521	8
Part-time.....	745	14	978	15

*The student may or may not be enrolled in a degree program.
Note: Details may not add to totals because of rounding.

Virtually the same proportions (about 40 percent) of men and women high school graduates age 18-21 were enrolled in college.

In the age bracket 22 to 34, the prime child-bearing period and the age when most post-baccalaureate studies are undertaken, the percent of women high school graduates attending college was smaller than that of men. In the 22-24 age bracket, women trailed men by nine percentage points. In the 25-34 age bracket, the proportion of women high school graduates who were enrolled in college was still six percentage points lower than that of men. At older age groups, e.g., 35 to 64, the proportion of high school graduates enrolled in college was 4 percent for both women and men (table 2).

Table 2. -- Percent of women and men high school graduates who were enrolled in college, by attendance status and age group: 1976

Age group	Percent of each age group enrolled		
	Total	Full-time	Part-time
Women high school graduates			
16-17	17	15	*
18-21	39	34	5
22-24	18	11	7
25-34	9	3	7
35-64	4	1	*
65 and older	1	*	*
Men high school graduates			
16-17	12	10	*
18-21	42	36	7
22-24	27	18	9
25-34	15	5	10
35-64	4	1	4
65 and older	*	*	*

*Percent not shown where estimate was less than 20,000 persons.
Note: Details may not add to totals because of rounding.

Dependency Status

A little over half of women college students were financially dependent on their parental families, as opposed to being financially independent of their parental families, i.e., living on their own or with their husband and/or children. The proportion of women students who were attending college full-time was 86 percent for dependent students and 32 percent for independent students. These attendance patterns are very similar to those observed for men (table 3).

Table 3. -- Number and percent distribution of women and men college students, by attendance status and dependency: 1976

	Total college enrollment		Full-time		Part-time	
	Number (in thousands)	Percent	Number (in thousands)	Percent of total	Number (in thousands)	Percent of total
Women students.....	5,438	100	3,241	60	2,197	40
Dependent.....	2,810	100	2,413	86	397	14
Independent.....	2,628	100	828	32	1,800	68
Men students.....	6,516	100	3,691	57	2,825	43
Dependent.....	3,263	100	2,651	81	612	19
Independent.....	3,253	100	1,040	32	2,213	68

Note: Details may not add to totals because of rounding.

Financial Resources of Dependent Students and Their Families

Almost half of women dependent college students had parents whose income was $20,000 or over (table 4). On the other extreme, however, one-twelth of women dependent college students lived in families where parental income was less than $5,000. Another eighth were members of families with parental income between $5,000 and $10,000. There were no significant differences between the parental incomes of women and men dependent college students.

Table 4. -- Dependent women and men college students by attendance status and income group: 1975

	Women			Men		
Parental income	Total	Full-time	Part-time	Total	Full-time	Part-time
	Percentage distribution					
Total.....	100	100	100	100	100	100
Less than $5,000.....	8	8	9	8	8	7
$5,000-$9,999.....	11	11	14	13	12	14
$10,000-$14,999.....	16	14	20	17	16	20
$15,000-$19,999.....	18	18	17	18	18	19
$20,000 and over.....	46	47	41	46	47	40
Number (in thousands)..	2,810	2,413	397	3,263	2,651	612

Note: Details may not add to totals because of rounding.

However, when both family income and the number of persons living in the student's family are taken into consideration, there is a statistically significant difference between the percentages of women and men dependent college students who lived in families with incomes below the poverty level (for family size). About 4 percent of women dependent college students lived in families with incomes below the poverty level, compared with 3 percent of men (table 5).

Table 5. -- Dependent college students living in poverty by sex: 1975

Poverty status	Women	Men
Percent of students in families below poverty level *	4	3
Number in poverty (in thousands)	115	85

* For definition of the term poverty level, see the Technical Notes.

With the exception of the proportion of dependent college students living in poverty, the family incomes of men and women were similar. The relative economic parity of families of women and men dependent college students can also be illustrated in terms of assets. About 40 percent of families with dependent daughters and sons enrolled in college had estimated assets of $40,000 or more (table 6).

Table 6. -- Dependent women and men college students, by size of family financial assets: 1975

Family assets	Women	Men
	Percentage distribution	
Total	100	100
No assets	10	8
$1-$19,999	25	25
$20,000-$39,999	27	27
$40,000 and over	38	40
Total with information (in thousands)....	2,420	2,828
No information * (in thousands)	391	434

*Includes nonresponse and those whose owner-occupied property and/or mortgage exceeded $100,000.

The proportions of students who worked during the year were similar for women and men dependent full-time undergraduate students. Among full-time undergraduate students, about 80 percent of women and men reported working during the year. However, women who worked earned less than men; on the average, women dependent full-time undergraduate students earned about $500 less during the year (table 7).

Table 7. -- Earnings of women and men dependent full-time undergraduate students. 1975

Item	Women undergraduates	Men undergraduates
Number of students (in thousands)	2,306	2,475
Percent with earnings	78	81
Mean yearly earnings of students who worked*	$1,402	$1,917

*The difference between the two means is significant at the .05 level.

Financial Resources of Independent Students

Among students who were financially independent of their parental families, larger proportions of women than men were in the highest income category. Some 29 percent of all women independent college students had individual or family incomes of over $20,000 compared to 22 percent of all men independent college students. Also, 8 percent of women independent college students and 4 percent of men independent college students were living below the poverty level (table 8).

Table 8. -- Independent women and men college students by individual/family income* and poverty status: 1975

Income	Women students	Men students
	Percentage distribution	
Total	100	100
Less than $5,000	15	14
$5,000-$9,999	20	21
$10,000-$14,999	19	23
$15,000-$19,999	16	21
$20,000 and over	29	22
Total number (in thousands)	2,628	3,254
Percent of students below the poverty level	8	4

*For purposes of this report, the family of an independent student means the student's family of procreation, i.e., spouse and/or children living at home.
Note: Details may not add to totals because of rounding.

In terms of assets, about a fourth of both men and women independent students had no assets; another half had assets of under $20,000 (table 9).

Table 9. — Independent women and men college students, by individual/family assets: 1975

Assets	Women	Men
	Percentage distribution	
Total	100	100
No assets	26	25
$1-$19,999	45	53
$20,000-$39,999	16	13
$40,000 and over	13	9
Total number (in thousands)	2,506	3,148
No information* (in thousands)	122	106

*Includes nonresponse and those whose owner-occupied property and/or mortgage exceeds $100,000.

Among independent full-time undergraduate students, similar proportions of women and men were employed during the year. Among those independent full-time undergraduate students who worked, women earned less during the year than men (table 10).

Table 10. — Earnings of independent women and men full-time undergraduate students: 1975

Item	Women undergraduates	Men undergraduates
Number of students (in thousands)	577	675
Percent with earnings	76	82
Mean earnings of students who worked*	$3,129	4,258

*The difference between the two means is significant at the .05 level.

CHAPTER 2

ENROLLMENT IN NONCOLLEGIATE SCHOOLS

Nearly one and a half million women, age 16 and over, were enrolled in noncollegiate postsecondary schools in the Spring of 1976. Their enrollment accounted for 47 percent of the total enrollment in noncollegiate schools. Seventy percent of these women noncollegiate students attended school part-time (table 11).

Table 11. -- Women and men enrollment in noncollegiate schools, by attendance status: 1976

Sex	Total		Full-time		Part-time	
	Number (in thousands)	Percent	Number (in thousands)	Percent	Number (in thousands)	Percent
Total	2,903	100	891	31	2,012	69
Women	1,367	47	405	30	962	70
Men	1,536	53	486	32	1,050	68

Of the 1,367,000 women 16 and over enrolled in noncollegiate schools, 21 percent were not high school graduates and 79 percent had graduated from high school. These proportions were similar to those for men noncollegiate students (table 12).

Although 70 percent of both women and men students in noncollegiate schools were over 24 years old, a larger proportion (42 percent) of women students were over 34 years old compared with 36 percent for men students. The age distribution of women students who were high school graduates was different than that for women who had not graduated from high school. Among high school graduates, 40 percent were age 35 or older; of non-high school graduates, 50 percent were over 34 years old (table 12).

Table 12. -- Women and men noncollegiate students, by completion of high school and age group: 1976

Age group	Women			Men		
	Total	High school graduates	Did not complete high school	Total	High school graduates	Did not complete high school
	Percentage distribution					
Total.....	100	100	100	100	100	100
16 to 24 years..	29	30	28	30	29	33
25 to 34 years..	28	30	27	34	36	25
35 and over	42	40	50	36	35	42
Number (in thousands)..	1,367	1,074	293	1,536	1,241	295

Note: Details may not add to totals because of rounding.

Financial Resources of Dependent Students and Their Families

An estimated 216,000 women noncollegiate students (or 16 percent) were financially dependent on their parental families. The rest were financially independent.

Slightly more than a third of women dependent noncollegiate students lived in families where the parental income was less than $10,000, compared with almost a half of men dependent noncollegiate students (table 13).

Table 13. — Dependent women and men noncollegiate students, by attendance status and income group: 1975

Parental income	Women			Men		
	Total	Full-time	Part-time	Total	Full-time	Part-time
	Percentage distribution					
Total.....	100	100	100	100	100	100
Less than $5,000.....	17	18	*	21	27	13
$5,000-$9,999.....	19	16	*	25	28	21
$10,000-$14,999.....	20	22	*	20	16	25
$15,000-$19,999.....	19	20	*	15	11	22
$20,000 and over.....	25	25	24	19	18	20
Number (in thousands).	216	130	86	313	192	121

*Percent not shown where estimate was less than 20,000 persons.
Note: Details may not add to totals because of rounding.

When both family income and the number of persons living in the student's family are taken into consideration, there is no statistically significant difference between the percentages of women and men dependent noncollegiate students who lived in families with incomes below the poverty level. Some 49 percent of both women and men dependent noncollegiate students lived in poverty-level families (table 14).

Table 14. —Percent of dependent noncollegiate students living in poverty, by sex: 1976

Poverty	Women	Men
Percent of students in families below poverty level*	9	9
Number in poverty (in thousands)	20	27

*For definition of the term poverty level, see the Technical Notes.

About a fifth of dependent women and men noncollegiate students reported that they had no assets, while another fifth of women and men had assets of $40,000 and over (table 15).

Table 15. — Dependent women and men noncollegiate students, by size of family assets: 1975

Family assets	Women students	Men students
	Percent distribution	
Total	100	100
No assets	22	21
$1-$19,999	33	35
$20,000-$39,999	24	20
$40,000 and over	21	23
Total with information, (in thousands)	192	284
No information* (in thousands)	24	29

*Includes nonresponse and those whose owner-occupied property and/or mortgage exceeds $100,000.
Note: Details may not add to total because of rounding.

About 60 percent of women and men dependent full-time noncollegiate students worked during the year. It is not possible to provide any reliable information on the earnings of dependent full-time noncollegiate students because the sample size for this group was too small (table 15).

Table 16. -- Percent of women and men dependent full-time noncollegiate students with earnings: 1975

Item	Women	Men
Number of students (in thousands).....	130	192
Percent with earnings.....	62	57

Financial Resources of Independent Students

The proportion of women independent noncollegiate students in the lowest income category was more than twice the proportion of men independent noncollegiate students in this category. Slightly more than a fifth of women independent noncollegiate students had individual or family incomes under $5,000 in contrast with a tenth of the men independent noncollegiate students. Also, 16 percent of women independent noncollegiate students were living below the poverty level, double the proportion for men independent noncollegiate students (table 17).

Table 17. -- Independent women and men noncollegiate students, by individual/family* income and poverty status: 1975

Income	Women	Men
	Percentage distribution	
Total.....	100	100
Less than $5,000.....	22	10
$5,000-$9,999.....	20	19
$10,000-$14,999.....	21	29
$15,000-$19,999.....	16	20
$20,000 and over.....	22	23
Total number (in thousands).....	1,150	1,224
Percent of students below the poverty level.....	16	8

*For purposes of this report, the family of an independent student means the student's family of procreation, i.e., spouse and/or children living at home.
Note: Details may not add to totals because of rounding.

About 30 percent of women and men independent noncollegiate students reported that they had no assets. In addition, 35 percent of women and 45 percent of men independent noncollegiate students had assets under $20,000. In other words, less than a third of the independent noncollegiate students of either sex had substantial assets (table 18).

Table 18. — Independent women and men noncollegiate students, by individual/family assets: 1975

Assets	Women	Men
	Percentage distribution	
Total	100	100
No assets	32	28
$1-$19,999	35	45
$20,000-$39,999	15	16
$40,000 and over	18	12
Total number (in thousands)	1,066	1,145
No information* (in thousands)	84	79

*Includes nonresponse and those whose owner-occupied property and/or mortgage exceeds $100,000.
Note: Details may not add to totals because of rounding.

Independent women who were attending noncollegiate school full-time were just as likely to be employed as independent men full-time noncollegiate students. About 70 percent of women and men independent noncollegiate students reported being employed during the year. It is not possible to provide any reliable information on the earnings of independent full-time noncollegiate students because the sample size for this group was too small (table 19).

Table 19. -- Percent of women and men independent noncollegiate students with earnings: 1975

Item	Women	Men
Number of students (in thousands)	275	294
Percent who worked*	67	75

*The difference between these two means is <u>not</u> statistically significant at the 0.5 level.

CHAPTER 3

CHARACTERISTICS OF FAMILIES WITH STUDENTS ENROLLED IN POSTSECONDARY EDUCATION

Among dependent students in college and in noncollegiate schools, nearly half of both women and men lived in families where the family head had attended or graduated from college.

Table 20. -- Dependent women and men postsecondary* students, by educational attainment of family head: 1976

Educational attainment of parental family head	Women	Men
	Percentage distribution	
Total	100	100
Elementary school	11	12
Some high school	11	12
High school graduate	31	31
Some college	17	17
College graduate	30	29
Total number (in thousands)	3,027	3,575

*Postsecondary includes both collegiate and noncollegiate students.

One in twenty women dependent students lived alone with a parent. A fifth lived in families with six or more members. These proportions were about the same for men dependent students (table 21).

Among independent students, there is a significant difference between the proportions of women and men students who lived alone and also between women and men students who lived in two-person families. Some 20 percent of women and 24 percent of men lived alone, while 30 percent of women and 25 percent of men lived in two-person families. Similar proportions of women and men lived in families with more than two persons (table 21).

Table 21. -- Women and men postsecondary students, by family size and dependency status: 1976

Dependency status	Number of persons in family					
	Percentage distribution					
Dependent	Total	Two	Three	Four	Five	Six or more
Women	100	6	23	29	20	22
Men	100	6	25	29	19	21
Independent	Total	One	Two	Three	Four or more	
Women	100	20	30	18	32	
Men	100	24	25	18	33	

Among dependent students, eight percent of both women and men had more than two other family members attending postsecondary education. Two-thirds of all dependent women and men postsecondary students were the only family members attending school (table 22).

Table 22. -- Women and men postsecondary students, by number of postsecondary students in family and dependency status: 1976

Dependency status	Number of postsecondary students in family			
	Total	One	Two	Three or more
	Percentage distribution			
Dependent				
Women	100	65	27	8
Men	100	64	28	8
Indenpedent				
Women	100	78	20	2
Men	100	83	15	1

Note: Details may not all to totals because of rounding.

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Characteristics of Postsecondary Students Twenty-five Years and Older

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